

RPG Reload File 075 – 'Crusade Of Destiny'

[March 31, 2016](#) by [Shaun Musgrave](#)



Hello, gentle readers, and welcome to the **RPG Reload**, the weekly feature where everyone has pointy ears. Each week, we take a look at an RPG from the App Store's past to see how the searing light of the modern age treats it. It's a chance to revisit old favorites, reflect on how certain games have settled into the overall market, or just to take a deeper dive than our reviews typically allow. As the legendary hero of time, I try to choose a balanced schedule of RPGs from week to week that reflect the diversity of the genre, but if you feel like I'm missing something important, please let me know. You can do that by posting in the comments below, dropping by the [Official RPG Reload Club thread](#), or by tweeting me at [@RPGReload](#). The schedule is planned pretty far in advance, so you might not see your suggestion soon, but I will put it on my master list.



We're going way back in time again for today's featured game, all the way back to the carefree days of September 2009. *Crusade Of Destiny* ([\\$2.99](#)), from developer DVideo Arts, was one of the first open world 3D RPGs on the App Store, predating even the original *Ravensword* ([\\$2.99](#)). Trying to assess the game gives me all sorts of conflicted feelings. Considering that DVideo Arts at the time was composed of exactly one person, I can't help but be impressed at he was able to accomplish. On the other hand, the game's quality was questionable even at the time, and age hasn't been a friend to it. Still, it's an important part of the history of iOS RPGs, and DVideo Arts is still around today due in no small part to its success.

DVideo Arts was founded in the USA in 2005 by Jopacus Parrot, the sort of one-person-band that was relatively common in the early days of mobile game development. The developer started by doing a few simple programs covering subjects like fortune telling, Blackjack, and Sudoku. Its first foray into more creative areas of gaming was *Animals Of Mass Destruction*, a late 2008 top-down 2D shooter. As big a step as going from a fairly simple Sudoku app to a fully-animated action-based shooter was, the next step was even bigger. Over the course of seven months, Parrot put together a 3D

polygonal action-RPG that took place in a fairly large open world, and he did it all by himself.



Crusade Of Destiny launched in the first week of September 2009, and at least on TouchArcade, the initial reaction was fairly hostile. The game's art, while better than what is typically referred to as "programmer art", didn't look all that great, and many people were upset at D'Vide Arts's decision to release the game at a \$9.99 price. The game received fairly lukewarm reviews at best, but the public sentiment did start to turn around on the game after a few days. Although heavily flawed in a lot of ways, the game did offer up a lot of content that scratched the itch for many people. Importantly, the developer was listening to feedback and doing his best to address it, issuing updates on a near-monthly basis for the first six months of release. The game only got a few sporadic updates after that, with the final one arriving in January of 2012. It remains in good working order on today's hardware, albeit without many of the bells and whistles of modern releases.

The basic premise has you playing as a destined hero who has to gather a complete set of magical artifacts in order to beat the big, bad dragon that

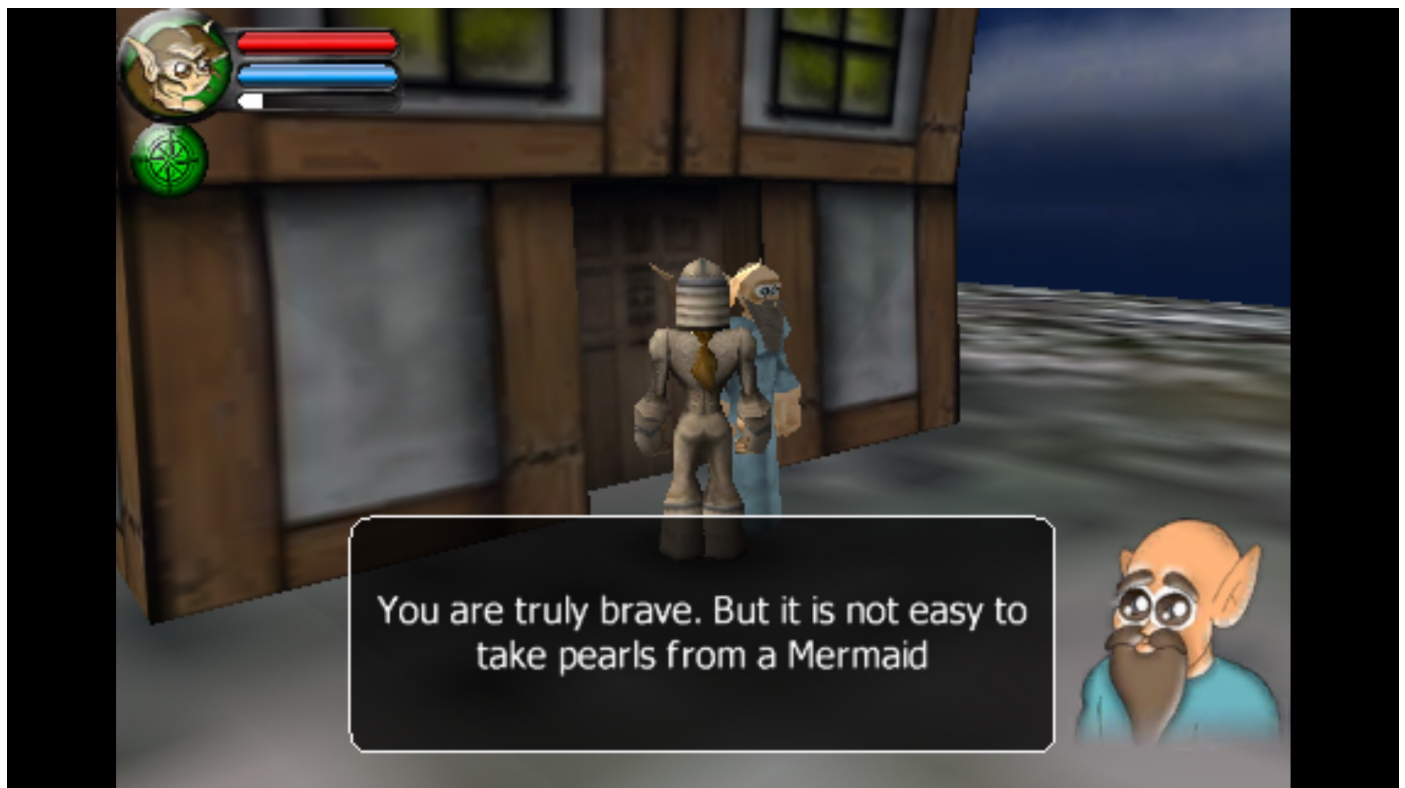
threatens the kingdom. There are tons of side-quests to complete on the way, plenty of new equipment to find or buy, several magic spells to unlock, and lots of monsters to battle. And battle you will, because this game doesn't even try to hide its grinding requirements. You will frequently reach points in the story where an NPC will tell you that you aren't strong enough, which is your cue to go out and smack around whatever enemies you're able to defeat until you gain enough levels to go on. It's one of the weaker parts of the design in *Crusade Of Destiny*, and it feels hopelessly artificial. It's not a case of having to do a little grinding, either. No, you'll often need to go out and get three or more levels, and due to the way the enemies are balanced, that typically entails running circles in one small location, fighting the same mobs over and over with your limited set of attacks.



The problem here is twofold: first, that the game's balancing is so bad that the player isn't anywhere near level-appropriate to pass the arbitrary gates that are in place, and second, that those gates aren't obfuscated in a more clever way. As a genre, RPGs most often run the risk of being designed to be flabby. There's an expectation from players that RPGs will be bigger and longer than other games, and that expectation is frequently met by

developers by adding in padding. Making that padding tolerable requires using as little of it as is necessary, and finding interesting ways to justify it. Long stretches of padding are particularly egregious from a design point of view. It's weird that *Crusade Of Destiny* is so bad about this, because games with lots of side-quests typically have them for the specific purpose of padding out the game in a relatively invisible way.

Not here, unfortunately. In *Crusade Of Destiny*, you have to grind to be able to survive the sub-quests, which in turn will get you part of the way, but not all of the way, to the next gated level check. Interestingly, this is an issue that persists in newer RPGs from D'Vide Arts. I think it's forgivable in *Crusade Of Destiny* to an extent, given the relative inexperience of the developer and how early this game was in iOS's lifespan, but if you're playing the game for the first time today, or even just replaying it after a long absence, you're going to notice it. The game is in the grind, and it's not an overly enjoyable one. As much grief as the game gets for its art, it's the balancing of the quest on the whole that is truly the worst quality of *Crusade Of Destiny*.



That said, in the bits of the game where aren't grinding, there are some cool

things going on. The boss battles are pretty ambitious, there's a fair bit of variety to the sub-quests, and although some of the art is questionable, other parts of the game look decent. The game world contains quite a variety of locales, and little touches like the lighting from your magic and visible equipment upgrades help things. Given the time period and most importantly the hardware and manpower available, the open world is quite big and impressive. The dungeon designs are fairly simple but involved enough that you'll need to pay attention to where you're going, and some of the secrets are fun to uncover, too. It's just too bad that the moments of enjoyment always have the dread of hitting the next grinding period hanging over them.

Another problem is the combination of a relatively simple combat system and enemies who behave nearly identically to one another. In the beginning, you'll just be jamming the attack button and hoping not to die. Once you get a bow or magic, you can open battles by doing a ranged attack, drawing the enemy towards you to finish off with your sword, but that's about as involved as things get. You'll get more powerful equipment, new attacks, and so on, but none of that changes what you're doing as much as it simply changes the numbers. Fighting isn't the only thing in the game, but it's what you'll be spending the overwhelming majority of your time doing, so it's a shame it's not more interesting.



Now, if you're the type of player who doesn't mind grinding, or better yet enjoys it, I think *Crusade Of Destiny* is still quite a playable game. There are some odd UI choices, particularly for selling items in shops, but the game plays well enough and there are some interesting things to see. For a few bucks, you'll certainly get some value out of it. And as I said at the beginning of the article, I *do* find it rather impressive for a game built by one person, particularly since it was his first RPG. You just have to go into it aware of its very deep design flaws. If nothing else, it's fun to time travel back to a period in the App Store when this kind of game had a promising future on the platform as opposed to the current day where 3D open world RPGs appear to be dying out.

That's just my take on *Crusade Of Destiny*, though. What do you all think? Have I missed something important about its appeal? I want to know what you think, so please leave a comment below, post in the [Official RPG Reload Club](#), or tweet me at [@RPGReload](#). As for me, I'll be back next week with the next chapter in our *History Of Handheld RPGs* series. Thanks for reading!

Next Week's Reload: *The History Of Handheld RPGs, Part Eight*

